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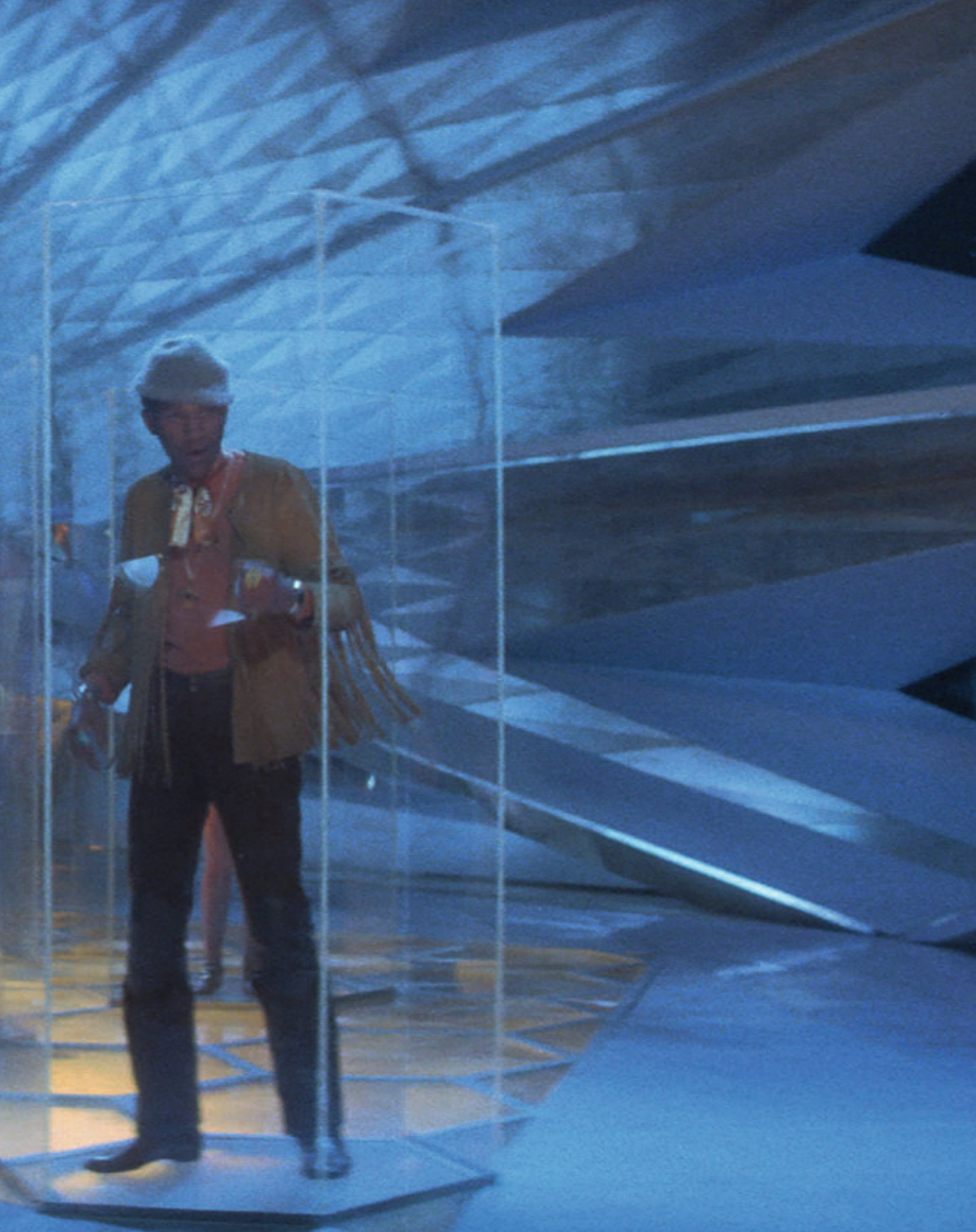


VAL AND YO

By
Dennis Bartok

Val Guest and Yolande Donlan. Yo and Val. They were as inseparable as a couple could be who'd been married for nearly 45 years by the time I met them in the late 1990s, and remained so until Val's death in 2006. The photo reproduced here shows them on the set of EXPRESSO BONGO in 1959 with Val practically kneeling at her feet. Notice their signatures with "Yo" and "Val" in parentheses after their full names, as if anyone could forget.

Val did, in fact, worship and adore her, although theirs was far from a storybook marriage. Their relationship was very loving, and very complicated, like almost all life-long love affairs are. Val made millions as a filmmaker -- and burned through nearly every penny of it before he died. (Even up to the end he was still taking out credit cards without her knowledge and racking up hidden charges.) I believe Yo, on the other hand, held onto to every dime she ever made. She's the one who bought their stunning mid-century home in the Palm Springs area and a mews house in London because she was so smart with money. Her and Val's house in Palm Springs was a veritable Roman temple to her stage career, decorated with vintage theatre playbills, congratulatory telegrams from famous stars, and costume sketches from her years as a diva of London's West End, ever since Laurence Olivier brought her to England to star in a production of *Born Yesterday*. Dominating the living room was an enormous oil painting of her in a gauzy green dress by Sir William Russell Flint titled, fittingly, "The Blonde Minx," which made her look a bit like Helen of Troy waiting for the Greek ships to arrive. And where were the posters from Val's dozens and dozens of films? In the garage.

FOR
TOM, DENNIS
AND SUSAN—
SO GLAD WE MET—
Love,
Yolande Donlan (Yo)
Val Guest (Val)

Val Guest was, in point of fact, a tremendous filmmaker, one of the best of his or any era. He was and probably still is underrated because he worked so fluidly in so many different genres, from steel-hard *policiers* (HELL IS A CITY, JIGSAW) to superb sci-fi (THE QUATERMASS XPERIMENT, QUATERMASS 2, ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN OF THE HIMALAYAS, THE DAY THE EARTH CAUGHT FIRE), frothy comedies (PENNY PRINCESS, MISTER DRAKE'S DUCK), Pop fantasies and spy films (CASINO ROYALE, WHERE THE SPIES ARE, WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH), and every genre in between. He reminds me in many ways of the great Richard Fleischer, another incredibly talented and ambidextrous director who could seemingly switch genres at the drop of a hat. Val and Dick Fleischer shared another undervalued quality in the film industry: they were among the friendliest and most delightful people I ever met in Hollywood, period.

I'll confess that the film you're watching on this release, TOOMORROW, isn't one of Val's lost masterpieces. I'm sure he'd agree with that if he were here. It's a tremendously silly film, and that's one of the reasons I love it. Val wasn't afraid to be silly when the material demanded it. His daffy, piss-take version of a James Bond movie, CASINO ROYALE, is chock-full of late Sixties looniness. (Val was supervising director on the project,

alongside John Huston and Ken Hughes, but if the film bears anyone's stamp, it's Val's.) Val's other entry in the 60s secret agent craze, WHERE THE SPIES ARE from 1965, stars David Niven (also from CASINO ROYALE) and Françoise Dorléac and it's a wonderful little diversion, much of it shot in an old Beirut now destroyed by decades of terrible warfare. Val even took a crack at the sex-crazed comedy CONFESSIONS OF A WINDOW CLEANER in 1974, which is better than it has a right to be, because of Val. Produced by Michael Klinger of GET CARTER fame, CONFESSIONS was made at a time when the British film industry was in economic free fall, and veteran filmmakers like Val – who'd been in the business since the early 1930s – were forced to make so-called Blue movies to stay employed.

TOOMORROW was on one level a work for hire: when Val got the call that producer Harry Saltzman wanted to speak with him, he thought it might be about another Bond movie, and one wonders what Val would have made of DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER or LIVE & LET DIE in the early 70s. The Canadian-born Saltzman had worked on some fascinating films in his career including British Angry Young Man gems LOOK BACK IN ANGER and SATURDAY NIGHT AND SUNDAY MORNING and the excellent Harry Palmer trilogy of THE IPCRESS FILE, FUNERAL IN BERLIN and BILLION DOLLAR BRAIN – but he was best known for the James Bond franchise which he produced with Cubby Broccoli, from DR. NO up through THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN when Saltzman left the series. I imagine that Saltzman, like Val, would have appreciated the loopy, cosmic sci-fi angle in TOOMORROW with its crystalline Fortress of Solitude space craft orbiting planet Earth, and androgynous Alphoids intoning fabulous metaphysical gobbledygook (scripted by Val), like:

"Intergalactic have monitored a new and remarkable pattern of vibrations, inconstant but radiating from this constellation ... The power of these vibrations is curative, not destructive ... We are suffering from a sterility of sound -- our electronic vibrations no longer stimulate. And of all the planets, Earth alone is producing the antidote ... I am recording that Earth is producing curative vibrations, a new form of electronic harmony."

And while the sci-fi scenes with the Alphoids in TOOMORROW may seem most like "Val," I'm guessing he would have also been drawn to the Youth Rebellion angle in the story, with Olivia Newton-John and her Toomorrow bandmates racing around to various protests and sit-ins. Keep in mind that Val made his terrific EXPRESSO BONGO a decade earlier about the pre-Beatles British coffee-house music scene, starring young Pop idol Cliff Richard. So, returning a decade later to check in on the Young Ones and the music they were making must have appealed to Val, keeping his pulse on the zeitgeist of the times.

Yolande Donlan doesn't appear in TOOMORROW, although she collaborated with her husband Val on a number of films. Her father James Donlan was a veteran Hollywood character actor in the early Sound era and (by her account) wicked alcoholic, who died when she was in her teens. Yo's career stretched back to the mid-1930s when she appeared, uncredited, in AFTER THE THIN MAN (1936) and a few years later in THE DEVIL BAT (1940) with Bela Lugosi. Things didn't really take off for her until Olivier's production of *Born Yesterday* in 1947, which led to a long and rich career in British theatre. She worked with Val on the comedy MISS PILGRIM'S PROGRESS in 1949, and they married several years later in 1954 after divorcing their respective spouses. If you want to see a really tremendous and still-overlooked film that Val and Yo made together, track down their superb crime movie JIGSAW from 1962. It's set in a bleak Brighton landscape of trailer homes and grocery shops, far from the bright lights of London. It's British crime cinema at its best: matter of fact and understated, the daily rhythms of life interrupted by a hacksaw and something terrible in the bottom of a steamer trunk. "Well, let's just say he hasn't been behaving very well," as a policeman says with dry British understatement.

I'll admit that I have a deep fondness for TOOMORROW. For many years the film was nearly impossible to see, in part because it was a failure on its original release, and in part because Val was forced to sue the producers over unpaid fees owed to him. I screened it twice at the American Cinematheque's Egyptian Theatre in the early 2000s when I was head of programming there, in a lovely 35mm IB Technicolor print borrowed from the B.F.I. in London (who we're collaborating with on this restoration and

release, bringing things full circle). I'm fairly positive TOOMORROW hadn't screened anywhere in the U.S. since its original release, and Val joined us for one of the Cinematheque's shows during a retrospective of his films – you can read a transcript of my Q&A with him in this booklet. For the other screening during the Cinematheque's annual Mods & Rockers Festival, we had a special guest slip in during the movie, and when the lights came up, the audience was shocked to see Olivia Newton-John standing onstage. She hadn't seen the film since its premiere in 1970, and found it, yes, tremendously silly, laughing wildly at her 21-year old antics. She recalled that she'd been brought to England to make the film and signed to a long-term contract which included all sorts of sequels, TV series and records. And when the film flopped, she was put on a plane back home, thinking her career was over before it had really begun (ha!). She was as delightful as you'd want Olivia Newton-John to be, yet another reason I'm overly fond of TOOMORROW. It's a bit of ridiculous Sunshine Pop Sci-Fi that really shouldn't exist, but it does, and I'm very glad for that.

If you want to see truly great Val Guest sci-fi, I'd encourage you to track down his three movies for Hammer Films, THE QUATERMASS XPERIMENT (1955), QUATERMASS 2 and THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN OF THE HIMALAYAS (both 1957), all based on original teleplays by Nigel Kneale. Ironically, when I spoke many years ago with Kneale, he was very disparaging about the film adaptations Val had directed, maybe because the producers were forced (very understandably) to cut down Kneale's much longer episodic TV scripts for the film medium. For my money, Val's three B&W Hammer sci-fi films are some of the best and most intelligent sci-fi of the 1950s (a great decade for it in general) – and of course, Val, ever the gentleman, only had the nicest things to say about Kneale in return.

Val's greatest sci-fi film, though, and arguably his finest masterpiece, is the epochal 1961 thriller THE DAY THE EARTH CAUGHT FIRE, starring Edward Judd (never better) as a cynical British journalist who winds up reporting on what could be the end of mankind, when simultaneous U.S. and Russian atomic bomb tests send the Earth off axis and spinning towards planetary doom. (Remember the shots of planet Earth in TOOMORROW seen from the orbiting spaceship, in fact – and while in

the later film it's the Alphoids facing their doom, both narratives are about apocalyptic, species-ending crises.) I screened THE DAY THE EARTH CAUGHT FIRE at the Cinematheque's Egyptian Theatre with Val in attendance, in a stunning 35mm print loaned by director Joe Dante and producer Jon Davison. At the end of the screening, the entire audience jumped to their feet and gave Val a spontaneous standing ovation, *just because the movie was so damned good.*

In that sense, TOOMORROW does share a link with Val's earlier sci-fi gems THE QUATERMASS XPERIMENT, QUATERMASS 2 and THE DAY THE EARTH CAUGHT FIRE: all are about human-kind, or alien-kind, confronting the End of Things, in a metaphysical sense. TOOMORROW's vision isn't nearly as bleak as the earlier films (it's in color, not B&W!), and the Alphoids may be saved by a groovy quasi-Moog "Tonalizer" and Olivia & band's Bubblegummy Pop, but there's still an entire species' survival at stake.

The last time I saw Val was the day he died. He'd been remarkably resilient into his early 90s, even surviving a head-on car accident (not his fault) that left him severely bruised and shaken up. After beating prostate cancer for a number of years, it came roaring back and he went downhill quickly. I got a phone call from Yo saying that Val had been taken to a hospice in Palm Desert, and the next day I drove out from Los Angeles with my then-wife Susan and our 2-1/2 year old son Sandor.

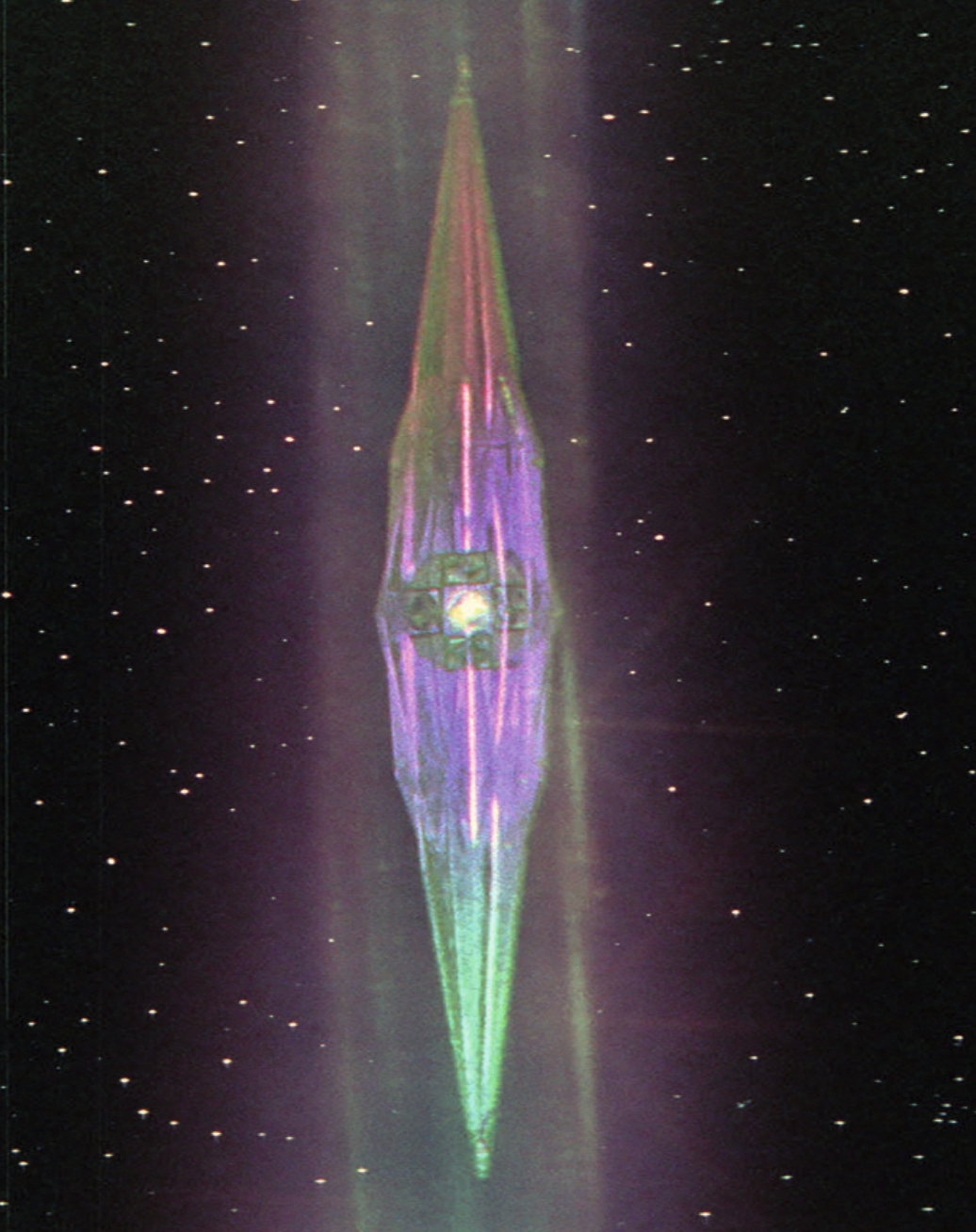
The facility in Palm Desert was pleasant enough, as hospices go, with Navajo-style rugs in the lobby and a vaguely Native American theme. Yo was sitting with Val in his room when we entered, and we sat with her for several hours while he drifted in and out of consciousness. At one point I took Sandor out of the room for a walk, and he ran up and down the halls, laughing and playing with his toy cars. For a minute I thought it would disturb the other residents, and then it occurred to me: if I were dying, what's the last sound I'd like to hear? Probably the laughter of a child. So I let him keep playing.

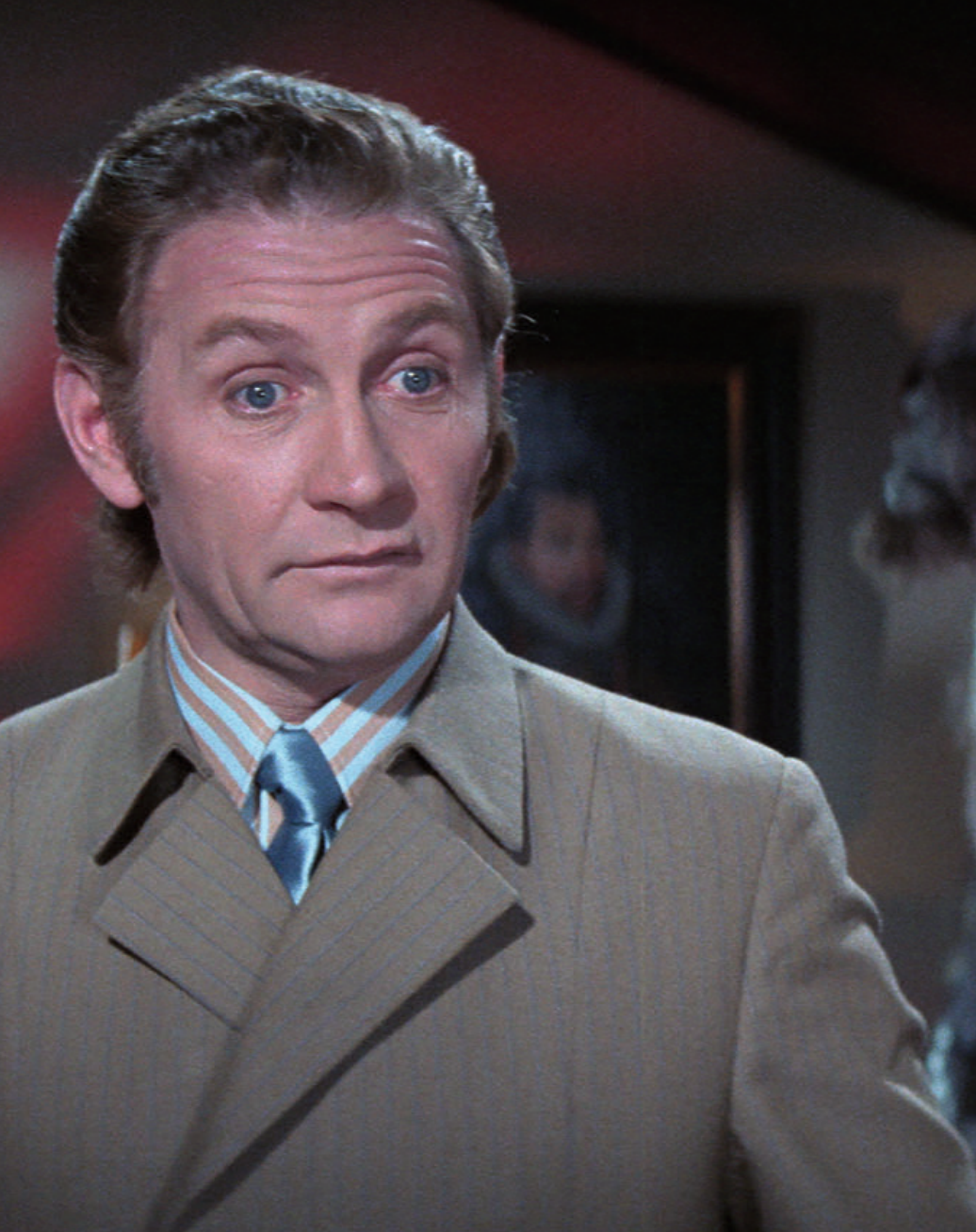
When we returned, Yo was telling stories to Susan about the old days in London in the 1960s, and their friend Stanley Baker, a striking, tough-guy British actor who Val had directed in HELL IS A CITY, alongside Donald Pleasence and Billie Whitelaw. Baker was a notorious adulterer, and after one of his many affairs, he'd come to Yo and Val with an expensive present, a fur coat I think, and begged them to deliver it to his wife to win her back. Yo wasn't a fan of Stanley Baker, as you could guess. He was long gone by that point, and in a few hours Val would join him.

After Val died, Yo moved back to her mews house in London, to be closer to her son and his family. I'd call her a couple times a year -- but she was lonely. Lonely without Val, lonely without all of their friends and colleagues and co-stars she'd outlived, even the Stanley Bakers. She finally joined Val in 2014.

Val and Yo. Yo and Val.

Dennis Bartok is a filmmaker, distributor, art-house exhibitor and author. He's co-founder of Deaf Crocodile.





toomorrow

By
Walter Chaw

Toomorrow ticks off every single box for me. It's a manufactured band premise born from, among others, (producer for *The Monkees*) Don Kirshner; it's directed by the great Val Guest; it's got a "those crazy kids"/*The Partridge Family*-or-*Josie & the Pussycats* "put on a show" plot married to a far out science fiction framing story; and it's got 1970s Olivia-Newton John at the very beginning of her irrepressible, gravity-warping effervescence. It features nifty creature effects and trippy environments built at Pinewood by legendary F/X artist John Stears - he of a certain Aston Martin DB5, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, lightsabers and a bickering pair of Rebel droids; and it portrays the spirit of the British Mod as an analogue to America's "Summer of Love." It's an emissary from an epoch in children's entertainment where even *Scooby Doo* and his pals found a way to start a band every few episodes; when even *The Jetsons* took a break for Jet Screamer and "Eep Opp Ork Ah Ah." It seldom made much sense narratively but it takes a while before narrative or exposition starts to matter to a kid. What did matter was the lightness of it, the joy of musical interludes whatever the motivation - whether there's a motivation at all. When you're young, what kind of spur do you really need to start a band? A girl? A tune? The extraordinary thing about garage band performance on film is it taps into its own energy: a sense of hope married to the libidinous displacement of the will to create. Though it hasn't been easily available for decades, for a lot of reasons *Toomorrow* hits me with a rush of nostalgia so viscerally pure that I'm staggered by it even though I watched it for the first time in my fifties.

It was the brainchild of Canadian producer Harry Saltzman who had collaborated with Albert R. Broccoli on shepherding the first nine James

Bond 007 films into the cultural stratosphere. Upon the dissolution of their partnership, Saltzman set up a company, Lowndes Productions, through which he produced the three Michael Caine Harry Palmer films. Saltzman had good instincts and a storied career. He found great success in franchises - I wonder if he was looking for another one with *Toomorrow*, signing as he did the cast to a three-film contract. By the time of its shooting, Saltzman had over-extended himself with a large loan with which he bought a controlling interest in the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation. The marriage was disastrous and by the time *Toomorrow* had finished, none of the crew had been paid. Val Guest, the journeyman director of masterpieces like *The Day the Earth Caught Fire* and the first two Quatermass films for Hammer, filed an injunction against the film's release pending his payment which was not only not forthcoming, but never coming at all. The experience by many accounts was so dispiriting it convinced Newton-John to give up acting for a while to pursue her budding musical career. This made her ready, of course (hindsight would say ideal), for the role of Sandy seven years later in *Grease.* I watched *Grease* at least twenty times in the summer of 1978 at the drive-in with my parents who perched me on the hood of our green Chevy Malibu with a chimichanga and a soda. A cheap diversion for a five-year-old (with a little privacy for the parents) who developed a hopeless and lifelong crush on Newton-John that summer. She is still, to me, the sweet tang of early sunrise, the warm twilights before the world grew sharp edges. The discovery of *Toomorrow* completes an unofficial trilogy comprised of *Grease* and *Xanadu:* musicals set in and emerging from the dream palace of the sweetness and the infinite possibilities of childhood.

It opens with owl-faced, blue undercover alien John Williams (Roy Dotrice) giving a Douglas Adams "mostly harmless" report to his superiors while taking off his skinsuit. His (failed?) mission? Discover a source of sustenance for his dying planet. Turns out, Williams, in his time among us, has missed a source of "vibrations" that will cure their species' "sterility of sound" that "no longer stimulates." It seems the universe is suffering from a severe deficit of good vibes. I know what kind of movie *Toomorrow* is, but I also know that this kind of sentiment is trenchant at the end of the 1960s in the United States. We were about to suffer Watergate; Vietnam was inflicting an identity crisis as the first war the United States lost in

its brief, uncontrolled brush fire of an existence. If the assassination of every progressive leader in America didn't send a "good vibes"-seeking alien off planet, what could? *Toomorrow* then is itself the proposed cure: an infusion of bright colors and youthful energy, unspoiled by a plot more complicated than "the stiffs wanna keep us down" and "fun will set you free." In *Toomorrow* and in life? It turns out there's not much more to it than that. Armed with a tight time window and a renewed sense of purpose, Williams (only accidentally named after an artist who would soon become the best-known film composer of all time) puts his people-suit back on and heads back to the surface. John Stears' creature effects and spaceship interiors are wonderful, sporting a Hammer Films aesthetic that is at once obviously "made" and also familiar enough as nostalgia to evoke a kind of *Dr. Who* disorientation. They connect at the same level as the musical sequences, in other words, somewhere at the crossroads between memory and hallucination. A mid-film chase sequence in the bowels of the alien spaceship is like a Dutch race through the fat end of a kaleidoscope. It's an analogy that explains the split images of the band at the end of the film, spiraling like a constellation in the night sky.

We meet the band with Olivia (Newton-John) waking up, brushing her teeth, making tea for her flatmates while wearing a button-down pajama top, short overcoat and panties. It's less sexy than it is warm. She is even here the promise of a forever of mornings waking up with this adorable woman, doting and pretty. Morning slapstick mayhem ensues with band members Benny (Benny Thomas) the philanderer; Vic (Vic Cooper) the nerd; and Karl (Karl Chambers) the super laid-back drummer getting ready for their big day. Guest manufactures a fantasy of Platonic communal bliss that had recently taken a hit with the Manson Family and *Easy Rider*, but still carries with it an optimism about our ability to overcome differences and share intimate spaces. Benny and Vic even share bathwater because there's "no time to fill it again" with Vic assuring Benny that he hasn't shaved in the tub - hasn't, in fact, "done anything" in the tub. This is a curious thing to say and a curious thing to do, especially in front of Olivia who is still largely in a state of undress. Again, it's not sex, it's comfort.

Composition students, they're on their way to class and then to win a slot in a big music festival where they'll unveil Vic's new invention: an amp he dubs "The Tonalizer." First stop, the "London College of the Arts," a fictional British Julliard housing a dance studio, classrooms and gallery. *Toomorrow* is pushed along with a manic energy tied to a sexual charge. Look how the teacher of their class is a woman we've seen in bed with Benny; how Karl is distracted by a nude model in a sketch session; how a room full of comely dance students are put through their paces. The thing bristles with youth, vibrancy, irrepressible animation. Soon, the gang joins a student walkout mirroring the university upheavals in the United States and England still fresh in the cultural zeitgeist in 1971 before it became clear that the machineries tend to win out over the dreamers. This is the feeling of when we believed that things were still possible. That change was coming. This is the period just before rebellion is beaten out of you.

The first musical number attracts the attention of alien John Williams. Karl starts it off with a stirring riff. Karl in real life was a respected session musician in the Philadelphia Soul movement, playing skins for bands like The Romeos, Archie Bell and the Drells, Gladys Knight and the Pips, Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes, MFSB and The Delfonics. The gang bops. The students dance. It's a scene the film and television show *Fame* will imitate in about a decade: gifted kids in an environment where their gifts are unifying rather than alienating; where whatever the disorder is that constructs creativity is fostered rather than discouraged. The next number takes place in a "studio" John Williams has conjured with his superior alien technology in seconds from pictures in a catalog. Guest cuts their performance with visualizations of each band members' most ardent fantasies. The juxtaposition of John Williams' conjuring abilities with this confirmation that the kids each have a goal for personal happiness lays the groundwork for the bargain the visitors are about to offer them. Williams, in his alien form, tells them they need their vibrations because their own are computer-generated. From a modern perspective, this can only be read as a warning against the oxymoron of art created by artificial intelligence. Whatever the missing element is in what we're currently referring to as "AI" (Williams calls it "music by computer") is what the aliens need to survive. Williams gives an example and Olivia says "real spooky, isn't it?" It is. It's a series of bloops and burbles. Hank wonders "is that meant to

stimulate or relax?" There's no soul to it. There's no story of self embedded in it that can be teased out in the interaction between creation and audience. Computers don't make art. Williams is starting to get it. He realizes his music lacks "emotion and heart." Hank agrees. He says "man, now you're groovin'!"

There's a lot of *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure* in *Toomorrow*, this goofy, unaffected innocence wrapped around a simple message of acceptance and pleasure. Both are invitations to return to a pre-critical moment where you were led by empathy and curiosity rather than hardened against exposure in an increasingly cold world that requires you to insulate yourself against it. The aliens ask the gang to return with them to their planet to save their people. Olivia pleads with their kidnappers. She says "we're only good in our environment" and that's an incredibly smart and prescient thing to say. Their next song is about "going back" as they escape into a pod to make their way back to the music festival. A song about nostalgia, the peculiarities of space travel devolve each briefly into themselves as children before they're deposited on terra firma. It's what the whole film is about. The aliens hatch a new plan: they'll allow the band to perform and then, at the height of the frenzy they're sure to create, the aliens will elevate the entire fest into orbit. In order to ensure the band sticks together and Vic is not distracted by his girlfriend, John Williams asks one of his alien compatriots to teleport down in the form of a beautiful woman. The implication is that he will teach his shipmate, Johnson, how to have sex, thus introducing a great deal of thematic complexities (his shipmates are all male) in a film that has already suggested the possibility of miscegenation. Film censors had relaxed a great deal concurrent with the cultural revolutions at the end of the 1960s. Nothing is terribly overt in *Toomorrow*, but it's naughty - complete with a montage of John Williams and "Johnson" (Margaret Nolan) visiting all the porn theaters in town. It's randy in the way of contemporary shows like *Love, American Style* and *Benny Hill*. Titillating for kids figuring out the whole sex thing for the first time. It's never better than it is before you know what it's all about.

The journey to the big show has the band changing in their car in a possible reference to Billy Wilder's *One, Two, Three*. (Of note, one of the other bands at the fest arrive in a big blue van that looks a lot like

The Mystery Machine. Possibly a coincidence that I'm reading as a confirmation that *Toomorrow* exists in the *Scooby Doo* universe.) They arrive just in time and hurry to a set that resembles many of the television variety show backdrops of this period. They sing a rousing song about the importance of sensitivity and empathy in an individual's happiness. "If you can't be hurt, you can't be happy." As the band reaches a crescendo, a bright light engulfs the festival and lifts them into the sky. Newton-John's burgeoning star power is obvious here, a rare combination of wholesomeness and a totally unaffected sexiness famously evoked a few years later in her *Grease* Sandy performance, before and after transformation. Her notorious video for hit song "Physical" furthered the notion that while she certainly was a sexual being, she was somehow never able to completely divorce herself from an essential innocence that defined her. *Toomorrow* is marked by the same sort of identity crisis. It is fascinating as an anthropological artifact unearthed after fifty-five years, but it's a distancing that makes it difficult to assess, free of knowledge of all the fads that inspired it and the popular culture that followed. It's hard for me to look at it through anything other than a nostalgic lens that thrills merely at seeing Olivia Newton-John at roughly the same time her image lodged itself in my young imagination. And it's an attempt by a struggling producer to build a franchise that isn't organic so much as it is forced and self-conscious, much like the phenomenon of 1980s boy bands and the new millennium's K-Pop superstars. Holding the idea of inorganic creation in mind, what *Toomorrow* has in common with these other clockworks is their ability to exist simultaneously as objects of contrivance and artifacts of delight. Things like *Toomorrow* put their audiences in the position of holding two truths in their hands.

Grease exists in this nether space. Robert Greenwald's *Xanadu*, too, where Newton-John plays Terpischore, one of the nine Olympian muses, animated by an artist's discarded sketches brushing against a mural on the side of a building. She roller skates everywhere. She encourages a handsome starving artist to partner with an old orchestra-leader to open a modern discotheque. What she is literally here is what she's been in each of these three films. She's the inspiration that pushes men to reach their full potential. Her persona isn't about coercion or bullying, of course, but of being a manifestation of youthful vigor and somehow of hopefulness.

TOOMORROW

What she promises is a bright future, happiness, a walking, talking source of soft personal sunlight. She's evergreen in that way, but also a relic of a particular period during childhood where her key films would make the most immediate and lasting impact. During *Toomorrow,* it occurred to me that for all the things the picture is or is not, it's defiantly a showcase for Newton-John and, more than that, for the specific aspect of possibility that was her ineffable genius. Each of these three films take different strategies to capture that same phenomena and all three should be considered documentation of a cultural moment. When I was seven, I remember seeing a giant banner for *Xanadu* hanging in a convention hall where my father had set up our merchant table for the weekend. It did then, and does to this day, hold a totemic power over me that I can't begin to unpack. When I try to understand the appeal of Taylor Swift, the lens that offers me clarity is my thrall to the airbrushed image of Olivia Newton-John.

Towards the end of *Toomorrow*, John Williams delivers a proclamation: "That's the only thing Planet Earth *can* teach us: the vibrations of youth." In a real way, that's what the movies of the matinee of our moviegoing experience can teach us, too. Even as adults. Even as we age beyond adulthood into our dotage, the sweet piquance of the films that formed us can only deepen upon reconsideration. *Toomorrow* is a portal through time and personal experience. You need only to have moved to a catchy tune played by a group of teens a few years older than you, eyes wide and heart full that love was going to look like this and you could move a crowd just by belting out the contents of your heart. The film's science-fiction element teases our dreams of galactic destiny. You're a secret prince, the inheritor of a vast kingdom on a dying planet and your people are coming to take you home where you can truly belong. Getting genre vet Val Guest gives the picture the feeling of furtive viewings of forbidden fare: spying stuff from behind a sofa and through your fingers that's freaked out and psychedelic when you're small enough can make you feel like your mind is being mutated in real time. The future is groovy, man. Everyone's in tune with the rhythms you're beating out like a poet with a typewriter for a heart. You are valued for your difference. The things that get you bullied, your talent, your daydreaming, are all your hidden superpowers, unappreciated until now. There is eternal value to entertainments like *Toomorrow* and deathless allure to icons like Olivia Newton-John. This is

the mythology of our lives. Here it is. Let's go.

Walter Chaw is Senior Film Critic for FilmFreakCentral.net. He has bylines in the *NY Times, Washington Post, Criterion, The LA Weekly, NY Post's Decider, NY Magazine's Vulture*, and is an occasional guest on NPR's "Pop Culture Happy Hour." He has written a monograph on *Miracle Mile* and a critical study of the career of Walter Hill called "A WALTER HILL FILM."

OF ART

TOOMORROW

TOOMORROW

Val Guest Q&A on September 22, 2002 / American Cinematheque

The following is a transcription of a Q&A with director Val Guest and moderator Dennis Bartok at the American Cinematheque's Egyptian Theatre after a screening of TOOMORROW on September 22, 2002. Our enormous thanks to the American Cinematheque for permission to reproduce it here.

Val Guest
Did I write that?

Dennis Bartok
How does it hold up after 37 years?

Val Guest
Well, it's noisy!

Dennis Bartok
How did you ever get involved with the unholy alliance of Harry Saltzman and Don Kirshner? Saltzman was one of the producers of the Bond films.

Val Guest
Yes, Kirshner was the big guy in New York. Harry Saltzman was co producer and owner of all the Bond series. And Harry Saltzman called me one day and said, I've got an idea that I'd like to talk to you about. And I thought it was another Bond film. I went up to see him, and he told me that he had this idea, that he bought the story from somebody, and would I be interested? And that's how that started. And he said he wanted to launch a new group. And the new group, he was going to call it "Toomorrow" with two O's, like 007, I suppose. It's four kids. He said,

the girl I've seen singing in a nightclub, she's never done anything. She's a nightclub [singer], has an act of her own. She's from Australia. And he says, two guys, I think they would be good. I'd like you to meet them, and he called them in. Oh, before he called them in, he said: the girl, of course, has a ridiculous name. We will have to change that. I said, well, what is it? He said, it's Olivia Newton-John. Can you imagine seeing that up in lights? He said, it's ridiculous. We'll find the name. And that's how I met them all.

Dennis Bartok
So, the four young leads were already cast when you came.

Val Guest
No, they weren't. Harry had seen them and had decided that it might be an idea to make them into a group, and he wanted me to see them and see what I felt about it. And eventually I heard them sing and everything together. They had never played together before.

Dennis Bartok
And they do their own singing for the film. The actors that we see on screen, in addition to Olivia, all sang in the movie as well?

Val Guest
Yeah, and so that's how that started. And Olivia Newton-John never changed her name.

Dennis Bartok
Now, did it seem at all strange to you to kind of marry this story about a student protest at the London College of Art with outer space Alphoids who were dying? One is kind of a college musical and the other is a sci-fi film.

Val Guest
Well, it seems very strange to me now. All Harry Saltzman had told me was that, I have an idea: What about getting a pop group up into space? And I really didn't know what that meant. But anyway, we worked something out, his vague storyline, it went sort of vaguely like that, then it had to be filled out, dragged up. All of us go mad sometimes.

Dennis Bartok
Well, what was amazing is, when you wrote and directed this, you were nearly 60, and yet, a lot of your films in the especially in the late 60s and early 70s, I think of CASINO ROYALE and WHERE THE SPIES ARE, are really youthful in tone. This has all this great stuff about, "your civilization is young, but the minds that rule it are old." What inspired you?

Val Guest
Was I really 60?

Dennis Bartok
I think so.

Val Guest
You've been reading my mail, but I don't know what inspired me. I thought it would be a fun, fun picture to do, and we had fun making it, a lot of fun.

Dennis Bartok
Now, what was the inspiration for the kind of crystalline design of the Alphoids' Space Station and the Alphoids themselves, who, I have to say, have fantastic, huge eyebrows.

Val Guest
Well, that is Phil Leakey, our makeup man. He gets all the credit for that. He was great. He had great ideas. But our art director was a fellow called Michael Stringer, who was ranked top art director. He had done some wonderful pictures, and he just had a nightmare, or a dream overnight, and came up with it.

Dennis Bartok
Now, was the band itself, was it kind of consciously modeled on The Monkees? Was it an attempt to kind of create a British Monkees, because there is kind of the shy one, the cute one, and the funky one.

Val Guest
Yes, we thought we could take a little bit of Mickey out of The Monkees,

but no, it was just taking the idea of, what could we do to launch a new group?

Dennis Bartok
Now, Roy Marsden plays the kind of sympathetic alien. He is actually really wonderful. He keeps a straight face for most of the movie.

Val Guest
Absolutely. Well, that was Roy's first film. I think it was his first film part. I mean, now, as you know, he has his own show on Broadway and everything. He's a very big man. He was a Shakespearean actor, very well-known one then, Royal Shakespeare Company and all that. And he got a kick out of doing this. He is a first-grade actor. I wanted someone who I knew I could depend on to be absolutely straight in that part with a sense of humor.

Dennis Bartok
Now, how involved were you in the writing of the music? Because I know, for example, you wrote some of the additional tunes for EXPRESSO BONGO. So, you've had that in your own resume. Were you involved at all with that here?

Val Guest
Yes, in as much as I got them to get Hugo Montenegro for this. I don't take any credit for the music. He did a fabulous job, and I didn't write any of the numbers in this one, but it was a good score.

Dennis Bartok
Now your own son appears briefly in it.

Val Guest
He does. Roy Marsden wanted to train Christopher, our son, for the Royal Shakespeare Company. He thought he had a lot of talent. At that time, Chris was sort of vaguely thinking about doing films, and so he had this small part. I must tell you that he came to his senses, and he's now the language professor at Richmond College in London.

Dennis Bartok
You see him very briefly at the end. He's the young, dark-haired man who's dancing with Vic Cooper's ballerina girlfriend, that's Val's son, Christopher. Now, could you tell when you were doing the film that Olivia Newton-John was really kind of meant for greater things? Did you get a sense that she was really the star of the whole cast?

Val Guest
I always did. I always thought she had an awful lot going for her, and she was never sure of it herself. And she really thought this would be her only film. She was great to work with. And I always thought she had enormous talents. And it was Don Kirshner who was the one who launched her in America, and that is the one thing that Don Kirshner liked about the whole production, because he hated Harry Saltzman, his co producer, and he used to send all sorts of letters, long letters to Harry Saltzman with all notes and things while we were shooting. And Harry used to give the notes to me and say, call him up, talk him out of them. And before we started, I went to New York to meet Don Kirshner. And Don was a very clever music man. He said, I heard some tapes of the girl, and he said, she's got a good voice. I hope you do something good with her. So that's really how it happened. But he never talked to Saltzman other than by notes, which I had to try to answer. But no, it was a rather stormy relationship between the two of them, and ended up a stormy relationship with me too, because with Harry Saltzman, I suppose I can tell you, I never got paid for the last half of the picture.

Dennis Bartok
What effect did that have? What happened with the distribution or the lack of distribution?

Val Guest
When the picture was finished, my agent said to me, look no more work on this. And we went to the law about it, and we put an injunction on the film. And I lifted the injunction for one night so they could have a premiere, a world premiere, at the London Pavilion in London, and after that, we stopped its distribution until I got the money. And I never did get the money. But I said, oh, hell, I'll never get it now anyways, so it had a

vague distribution.

Dennis Bartok
Do we have any questions from the audience for Val Guest about working on TOOMORROW?

Audience Member
Do you know of any plans to put this movie out on DVD?

Val Guest
Well, it's not up to me, because I don't own the movie, unfortunately. I don't know whether it will come out on DVD or not. I suppose eventually it will, but it's not up to me. I would say yes, tomorrow if they asked.

Audience Member
This is only the second time you've seen it since the premiere?

Val Guest
This is the second time I've seen the film since its premiere at the London Pavilion that I allowed them to do that night. I haven't seen it since then. So I was astounded, as you are.

Dennis Bartok
Now, when Olivia Newton-John was here [several] years ago, she said that there were plans for a sequel and that she had actually signed and had been contracted to do a sequel because everyone was so sure that the film would be such a great smash and they would be like the next Monkees. Was that true?

Val Guest
Well, we had a wonderful press for the film when it opened that one night. And no, the reason the sequel was never done was because when we sued Harry Saltzman, who had done it with a Swiss company called Sweet Music, they had no money, and they'd gone out of business. And this ended the partnership between Saltzman and Cubby Broccoli [Albert R. Broccoli], who was the co-producer of the Bond films, because their agreement was that that neither of them could use any of the Bond [films] as a guarantee for anything, and Harry had made it a guarantee for the Swiss bank. So, the whole thing fell apart and there was no sequel. There was no one to do it.

Dennis Bartok
And that led to, in fact, Cubby Broccoli, buying Harry Saltzman out of the Bond films.

Val Guest
That's correct. It ended after all those years, unfortunately like that.

Dennis Bartok
Because of TOOMORROW?

Val Guest
Because of TOOMORROW.

Dennis Bartok
Now, did you cross paths with any of the principals, with Olivia Newton-John, or with any of the other cast members or people you worked with in later years?

Val Guest
Oh, yes, we saw Olivia a couple of times, you know. But no, she went on to be in things over here, and I was over in England. Roy Marsden, yes. And Roy Dotrice too, of course. But otherwise, we all went our respective ways. I was thrilled to see that Olivia really made it. I think it was terrific. A genuine interesting thing is the beautiful Guyanan [actress], who was Karl Chambers' girlfriend [in the film], was a model who got a visa to work in London on this film. She was once Miss Guyana, and she was only allowed to do this film. And towards the end of the film, she came to me and said, I don't think I can get another working permit here unless I have another job. So, I wrote a letter on our company note paper saying, if you can get a visa, we could employ you. And she took it to the home office, and he got her a visa. And because it got her a visa, she met the man who was to be her future husband, through me, Michael Caine, and she's now married to Michael Caine, and has been all these years.

Dennis Bartok
Well, that's actually a really wonderful, wonderful kind of postscript to the troubled history of TOOMORROW. We have any other questions?

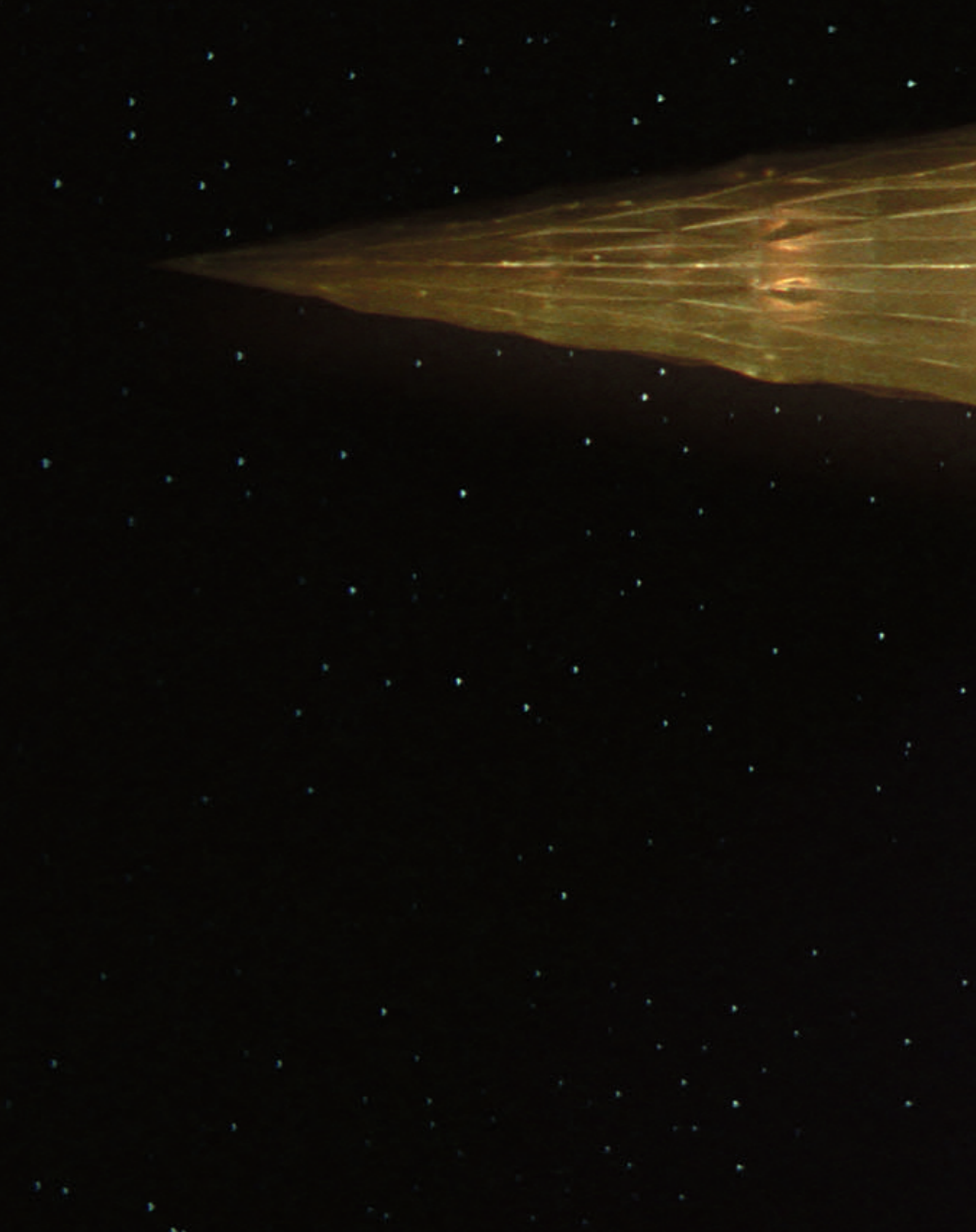
Audience Member
I just wanted to say that I grew up in a small town in Louisiana, and I think around the sixth grade, I was obsessed with Olivia, like I'm sure a lot of these guys and girls are, but I've now seen this movie twice, and I just want to say thank you. I think it's fun and energetic, and I really love seeing Olivia up there, and I'm glad you guys are showing this movie. And if you show it in three years, I'll be back.

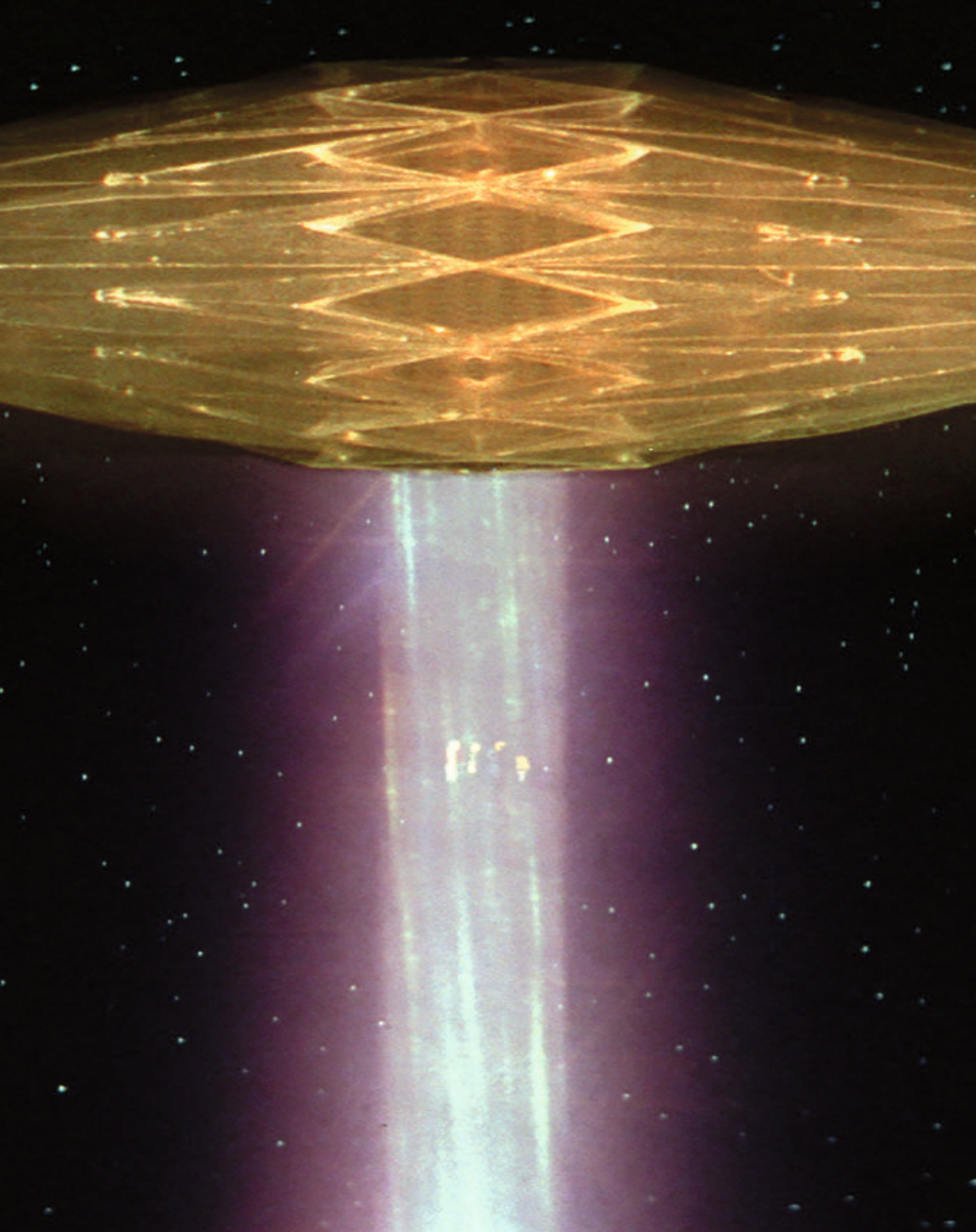
Dennis Bartok
Wonderful, he says he loved the film, and if we show it in three years, he'll come back and see it again.

Val Guest
Oh, well, that's fine. If I'm here in 30 years' time, I'll come back and see it.

Dennis Bartok
Well, thank you so much for joining us, for making this really wonderful film, once again, ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Val Guest, thank you all for coming.

Val Guest
Thank you, thank you.





Notes on Restoration

All-new restoration by Craig Rogers and Michael Coronado, from new scans of the 35mm OCN and an original 35mm IB Technicolor print at the British Film Institute. The camera negative was used whenever possible, but there were a number of shots (particularly in reel 4) which the negative had been severely scratched. In those cases we used the IB technicolor print. Color grading by Tyler Fagerstrom. The final restoration is a collaborative effort of the British Film Institute (BFI) and Deaf Crocodile.

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And although they've been gone for many years, we'd like to acknowledge the director of TOOMORROW, Val Guest, and his wife Yolande Donlan, for their wonderful friendship.

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